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CELEBRATION OF

VICTORY
PROGRAM

JANUARY 5-7 1951

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

ASHEVILLE, N. C.

NORTH CAROLINA ROOMS

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Program Committees For Victory Celebration



CHESTER BROWN, Chmn.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Chester Brown, R. J. Lewis, Mrs. Walter E. Clark,
Mrs. G. W. Murphy, C. L. Garrett, C. C. Curtiss, Burgin
Pennell, Alden Angline and Thomas Black.

Luncheon Committee:

Mrs. Hugh Howell, chmn.
Mrs. J. B. Dalton
Mrs. W. L. Swanson
Mrs. J. E. Bagwell
Mrs. C. C. Curtiss
Mrs. F. T. Erwin
Mrs. H. R. Holtzclaw
Mrs. R. M. Miller
Mrs. L. H. Giezantanner
Mrs. C. C. Bridgers
Mrs. A. C. Coffey
Mrs. C. J. Ashworth
Mrs. C. D. Stowe
Mrs. L. F. Witt
Mrs. T. A. Groce
C. J. Benfield
L. T. Smith

Invitation Committee:

Mrs. Harry S. Corey, Jr., chmn.
Mrs. E. E. Wheeler
Mrs. Ray Ingle
Mrs. B. V. Chamblee
Mrs. C. O. Briggs
Mrs. E. L. Symms
Mrs. W. R. Murray
Mrs. J. P. Goodman
Mrs. T. L. Bramlett
Mrs. O. L. Fitzgerald
Mrs. W. E. Reid

Bond Settlement Committee:

Thomas Black, chmn.
W. B. Nixon
Paul Crowder
John Joyner
C. C. Bridgers
W. T. Duckworth
John Parker

Open House Committee:

Mrs. E. Z. Stines, chmn.
Mrs. Carter Preslar
Mrs. A. Jack Garner
Mrs. C. E. Rector
Mrs. R. C. Nailling

Pageant Committee:

Mrs. M. C. Eisenhauer, chmn.
Mrs. Allen Patterson
James Nixon
Al Henderson
Arthur Waller
Millender Matthews
James H. Matthews
W. L. Wagner
Miss Mildred Thomas

Photographer:

Al Henderson

Church History:

Miss Wallace Tucker

Pageant:

Miss Mildred Thomas

Transportation Committee:

E. L. Symms, chmn.
E. L. Sams
Mrs. C. C. Bridgers
Mrs. L. F. Locke
J. W. Hoyle
Thomas Johnson
Lewis McGee
W. E. Smathers

Entertainment Committee:

Mrs. George Pennell, chmn.
Mrs. Sue Reusing
Mrs. Vernon Stroupe
Mrs. J. N. Davis
Mrs. Zeb Robinson
Mrs. Homer Brooks
Mrs. W. Perry Crouch

Program Committee:

Fenton Erwin, chmn.
M. H. Cox
Burgin Mullinax
Miss Hattie Lance
Miss Ethel Blackstock
Mrs. T. R. Young

Publicity Committee:

Carter Preslar, chmn.
Halsey Leavitt
Miss Gertrude Ramsey
Al Henderson
Mrs. Thomas C. Smith
Mrs. Carl Bamford
C. D. Edwards

Victory Celebration Program

HOMECOMING NIGHT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 1951

7:30 P. M.



C. L. Garrett, Chairman of Deacons, Presiding

Horace Easom, Shelby, N. C., Directing Music



Hymn: "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord".....	247
Invocation.....	Dr. E. Gibson Davis
Anthem: "Cantate Domino"	Buck
The Adult Choir	
Recognition of Visitors, Former Pastors, Ministers and Baptist Officials.....	Carter M. Preslar
Greetings:	
In Behalf of Community.....	The Hon. Clarence E. Morgan
In Behalf of Ministerial Association of Asheville and Buncombe County.....	Dr. C. Grier Davis
In Behalf of Buncombe County Baptist Association.....	Rev. Nane Starnes
In Behalf of Baptist State Convention.....	Dr. C. C. Warren
Greetings from Former Pastors Present.	
Special Music by Men's Quartet.	
Highlights of First Baptist Church History.....	George Pennell
Symbolic Burning of Bonds.....	Thomas B. Black
Dedicatory Prayer.....	Dr. John W. Inzer
Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation" (Stanzas 1 and 3).....	244
Our Church in Prospect.....	Dr. W. Perry Crouch
Solo.....	Miss Nell Parsons
Address: "The Church of Christ".....	Dr. W. F. Powell
Benediction: "Hallelujah Chorus" from the Messiah.....	Handel
The Adult Choir	



The Story Of The Debt

THE story of the debt of the First Baptist Church of Asheville, N. C., is not the dismal record that some might imagine it to be. Actually it begins with a thrilling account of men who wanted their church to stay abreast of the growth of their city. All about them men were building new homes, new city and county structures, and new school buildings. The church building was full and crowded. It was located on a busy street corner with no room for proper future enlargement. Therefore they launched a building program that amounted to about seven hundred thousand dollars, which included the cost of a lovely sanctuary and four educational units and a parsonage. The work on the building was begun November 16, 1925 and was completed in March of 1927. In addition to the cash raised for the building, an original bond issue of \$425,000 was negotiated, and then shortly after the first one, an additional bond issue of \$50,000, thus creating a total debt of about \$475,000 by the close of 1927.

Some year and a half later the balance due through the sale of the old property on College and Spruce Streets was received and applied to the debt, reducing it to about \$320,000 by the summer of 1929. Shortly after this time our country experienced the great financial crisis of 1929, which practically bankrupted the members of the First Baptist Church, along with the citizens of Western North Carolina and marked the beginning of a great depression in our country.

During the years that immediately followed, very little could be paid on either the principal or interest of the debt and the total amount again climbed above \$400,000 by the close of 1936. It was on January 1, 1937 that the church claimed the help of emergency federal statutes authorizing reorganization and refinancing of bonded indebtedness of the American people under the supervision of the courts. This was a depression measure intended to help institutions that had been caught in the financial crisis with an impossible debt. In accordance with the terms of this pro-

Victory Celebration Program

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1951

LUNCHEON

Honoring Our Visitors and Church Leaders

12:30 P. M. - 2:30 P. M.

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Burgin Pennell, General S. S. Supt., Presiding

❖ ❖ ❖

Hymn: "Break Thou the Bread of Life".....	81
Invocation.....	Clarence N. Walker
Solo.....	Mrs. H. L. McDaris
Recognition of Church Leadership Family.....	Alden Angline
Tribute to Church Leadership.....	Dr. W. Perry Crouch
Presentation of Mrs. J. M. Dawson.....	Mrs. G. Westbrook Murphy
Address.....	Mrs. J. M. Dawson
Solo.....	Mr. Burgin Mullinax
Presentation of Dr. Harold W. Tribble.....	Dr. Walter E. Clark
Address.....	Dr. Harold W. Tribble
Prayer.....	Dr. W. M. Vines

2:30 P. M.

Sealing of Corner Stone.....	Carter M. Preslar
Dedicatory Prayer.....	Dr. W. Perry Crouch

❖ ❖ ❖

HISTORICAL PAGEANT OF THE CHURCH

7:15 P. M.

Organ Music.....	Miss Mildred Thomas
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7:30 P. M.

Hymn: "Faith of Our Fathers".....	249
Invocation.....	Dr. W. H. Fitzgerald
Presentation of Pageant.....	Mrs. Murray Eisenhower
Benediction	Dr. J. R. Owen

vision and by agreement with the bondholders protective committee, much of the accumulated interest was forgiven and an extension of the bonds was secured with a graduated rate of interest until maturity, placing the final due date at 1967.

We joyfully call attention to the fact that the church fathers never compromised on any of the principal of the indebtedness. Part of the interest was forgiven, but never the principal. In fact, the final settlement has come seventeen years ahead of the agreed date for payment. Of course the church has from time to time purchased bonds on the open market at less than par value. This plan is followed in all branches of business. If bond holders preferred to discount their bonds rather than hold them to maturity, that was their privilege. But the church never sought a cancellation of any part of the principal of the indebtedness.

Following the settlement of interest and lengthened maturity date, the church membership made some effort immediately toward payment of the debt. From 1937 to 1944 all interest requirements were met and the principal was reduced to \$258,000. However, there were many members who still doubted that the church would ever be free of debt.

In the spring of 1944 the church budget was increased from \$34,500 to \$52,000. This included the interest for the year and a sufficient amount toward the principal to retire the debt by maturity (1967). The receipts amounted to \$60,000 or \$8,000 more than the budget. A budget for \$60,000 was adopted for 1945 and the receipts for that year amounted to above \$75,000. In the spring of 1946, our church leadership believed the time had come to seriously undertake a program that would retire the debt by 1950. In

keeping with their faith, a program of tithing and careful stewardship was presented to our people and a budget of \$92,000 was adopted. Our receipts for 1946 amounted to above \$97,000 so the budget was increased to \$104,000 for the next year and each year since that time.

From the figures given, it is easy to see that most of the money for the debt retirement program has come through the regular church budget. In January of 1949 it became apparent that we would need a boost beyond the budget receipts if we were to pay out by 1950, so we began the Dollar-A-Week Club. This club was composed of those who would give one dollar per week for one hundred weeks, over and above their regular church offering. The members of this club have paid in approximately \$13,635.00 to the building fund since January 30, 1949.

In August of this year, the Finance Committee and Deacons began laying definite plans to complete the debt by December 31, 1950. A victory program was launched, stressing loyalty to the church and regular attendance. In addition, members were asked to pledge a definite amount over and above their regular offering, to be paid during the eighteen Sundays of September, October, November and December. About \$17,000 was pledged for this purpose. In addition, many who did not make pledges have given additional amounts during this period.

The story of the debt has been a story of faith, struggle, sacrifice, patience and careful planning on the part of the leadership and membership of this church and the constant guidance and help of the Spirit of God. Our present membership express their sincere thanks to all who have had a part in completing this debt, and their sincere gratitude to Almighty God for His manifold blessing toward us. We pray that He will lead us on to greater service for His glory.



Victory Celebration Program

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1951

MORNING WORSHIP — 11:00 O'CLOCK IN SANCTUARY

✻ ✻ ✻

Theme: "Our Church Answering the Great Commission"

✻ ✻ ✻

Organ Prelude — Chiming the Hour.

Call to Worship.

Doxology — Invocation — Gloria Patri.

Hymn: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!" (Stanzas 1-2-4).....133

Worship Through Meditation:

Scripture Reading.

Prayer and Choral Response.

Recognition of Southern Baptist Convention Leaders Present.

Announcements.

Worship Through Dedication:

Hymn of Dedication: "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun"..260

Prayer of Dedication: Tithes and Offerings.

Anthem of Dedication: "God So Loved the World".....Stainer
The Adult Choir

Address: "Our Church and A Needy World".....Dr. Duke K. McCall

Hymn of Invitation: "O Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling"....264

Choral Benediction: "Blest Be the Tie That Binds".....217

Organ Postlude



Our Excellent Building



OUR building which is now free of debt is really a very remarkable one. Construction was begun on it in 1926 and the church moved into the building in March, 1927. During the years since that time small structural changes have been made in some of the educational portions, including the renovation of one wing for a chapel, the installation of carillon bells as a memorial to our men lost in World War II, the complete renovation of the basement for a social hall, modern kitchen and cafeteria, and two adult departments for educational work. The building is so constructed that additions may be added without impairing or greatly changing any part of the present building. Under modern educational methods, there is adequate space for only about 1,000 in Sunday school. However, some relief in the elementary departments would make possible a Sunday school of 1,200 to 1,400. Our sanctuary seats 1,700.

The entire plant includes a group of five buildings which pyramid in a single structure. The exterior walls are of Booker brick which resembles the English handmade brick of the early 18th century. The profuse patterns occurring throughout the brickwork are set off at intervals by clearly delineated ornament in pink Georgia marble. The brick color is a warm heather purple. The terra cotta bands and copings match the color of the brick. The outer units of the educational buildings are two stories and basement, and the inner

units three story and basement. The sanctuary is octagon in shape, reaching to a height of five stories, and is capped with a dome like an inverted bowl. All windows of the building are of green and amber crinkled Flemish glass. The interior trimmings are of chestnut and has a softness and simplicity that is conducive to worship. It is equipped with opera chairs, and has a four manual Pilcher organ.

Our chapel seating 350 is equipped with pews of light grey that fit into the color scheme of the building. It has a Hammond organ and a baby grand piano. A movie projection room is built in the rear of the chapel and equipped to show silent or sound movies, slides or film strips. A stage with dressing rooms is provided for church drama. A well appointed room in the office wing houses a library of over 4,000 volumes. Three furnaces with stokers supply heat for the building. There are fourteen assembly rooms, seventy-one additional class rooms, six offices, library, nine rest rooms, kitchen, cafeteria table, social hall, and several supply rooms and supply closets.

We have every reason to be grateful to the church leaders of the '20's' for their vision of an adequate church building. We will need to make minor changes and additions from time to time, but in the main, we have a most excellent house of worship and training. May we rejoice that it is now free of debt.

Victory Celebration Program

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1951

EVENING WORSHIP — 7:30 O'CLOCK IN SANCTUARY

✻ ✻ ✻

Theme: "Moving Forward With North Carolina Baptists"

✻ ✻ ✻

Organ Prelude.

Choral Voluntary.

Hymn: "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus".....205

Invocation — Response.

Review of Our Victory Program.

Recognition of State Convention Leaders Present.

Offertory Hymn: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross".....108

Dedicatory Prayer — Tithes and Offerings.

Offertory Anthem: "Seek Ye the Lord".....Roberts
The Adult Choir

Address: "North Carolina For Christ".....Dr. M. A. Huggins

Invitation Hymn: "Onward, Christian Soldiers".....209

Benediction and Choral Response.

Organ Postlude.



Story Of The Organized Life Of Our Church Today

THE organized life of our church today is all inclusive and is designed to meet the needs of the entire church family. Five major organizations emphasizing different angles of church activity combine to provide a well balanced program for Christian growth and service. The educational program of our church is under the general direction of the Pastor, Mr. Alden Angline, Educational Director, and Miss Mildred Thomas, Co-Minister of Music and Education.

The *Sunday School* division is under the leadership of Mr. Burgin Pennell, General Superintendent. This organization seeks to enroll everyone of all age groups, both church member and non-church member. Its purpose is Bible study with evangelism and Christian living as its

ultimate goal. 1,653 people are enrolled in its fourteen departments which assemble each Sunday morning at 9:45 for worship and study. 187 officers and teachers give willingly of their time and talents weekly in preparation for teaching and are faithful at their posts of duty on Sunday. In addition to the Sunday services, this host of workers gives time monthly to planning and preview lesson study at the Monthly Workers' Council and the Teachers' Meeting. These same workers with members of their classes participate in a monthly visitation program in a concerted effort to continually enlarge the organization and reach more people.

The *Baptist Training Union* seeks to enroll every member of the church to train them in Christian service. The plan of this organiza-



Mrs. THOMAS SMITH
FINANCIAL SECRETARY



Mrs. J. B. DALTON
CHURCH HOSTESS



Mrs. FRANK MESSER
CHURCH SECRETARY



Mrs. CECIL PALMER
EDUCATIONAL SECRETARY



Miss ELIZABETH MACHEN
PASTOR'S SECRETARY

THE CHURCH STAFF



Miss MILDRED THOMAS
CO-MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION



DR. W. PERRY CROUCH
PASTOR



Mrs. W. PERRY CROUCH
PASTOR'S WIFE



ALDEN ANGLINE
EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR



JAMES WILSON
JANITOR



LEROY WILLIAMS
JANITOR

tion is so set up that every member will receive special training along many lines. These include experience in secretarial work, public speaking, program building, public praying, directing socials, presiding over groups, daily Bible reading, and missionary activity. Through committees in the individual unions of the several departments effective training is received each Sunday evening in this organization. As a result of a recent Enlargement Campaign the Training Union now has ten departments graded throughout and running parallel with the Sunday school. The departments are, namely, Nursery, Beginner and Primary Story Hour Departments, Junior A and Junior B Departments, Intermediate A and Intermediate B Departments, Young People's Department and Adult A and Adult B Departments. The total enrollment is 477 with an adult leadership of 77. Once each month the adult leadership meets as an executive body to formulate plans and policies which are presented for approval to all officers and committees of unions at their monthly Officers' Council. The leadership and members of unions meet once each month for participation in a visitation program.

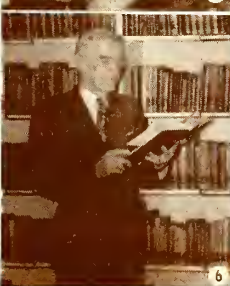
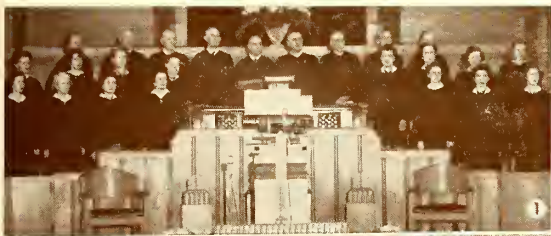
The *Woman's Missionary Union* places particular emphasis on missions at home and abroad. The missionary family includes the Woman's Missionary Society for women, the Business Women's Circle for professional women, the Young Women's Auxiliary for young women ages 16 through 24, the Intermediate Girls' Auxiliary for girls 13 through 16, the Junior Girls' Auxiliary for girls 9 through 12, the Intermediate Royal Ambassadors for boys 13 through 16, the Junior Royal Ambassadors for boys 9 through 12, the Sunbeams for boys and girls 4 through 8, and the Sunbeam Cradle Roll for small babies and children through 3 years of age. Mrs. G. Westbrook Murphy is the able President of the Woman's Missionary Union for 1950. This organization seeks to give an enlarged vision of the needs of the world through a five-point emphasis: Mission Study, Bible Study, Prayer, Giving, and Community Missions. Twice each month these emphases are the major concern of each organization as they meet for concerted study of some mission field. In addition to the regularly outlined activities three seasons of Prayer are held each year: one for State Missions in September, one

for Home Missions in March, and one for Foreign Missions in December. Special offerings are taken for these causes, and our Southern Baptist agencies depend heavily upon these for the support of our mission program. The total enrollment of the Woman's Missionary Union is 495.

The purpose of the *Men's Service Club* is to promote every phase of our church and denominational life and to enroll as many men as possible to participate. The club meets monthly on the Wednesday night following the third Sunday for a supper meeting. A good program is always planned and Christian fellowship is enjoyed by everyone. The members of the club are divided into the following committees which indicate their range of activity: Executive, Program, House, Local Church, Enlistment, Fellowship, Denominational Activities, College and Service Men Contact Committee, Boy's Work Committee, Evangelistic, and Sick and Shut-in Committee. Their special project is the promotion of a club for young men having similar purposes. Once a year they sponsor a Ladies' Night banquet at which

time a banquet dinner with all the trimmings is had and a good program is given. 125 men are enrolled in the Club, and Dr. James H. Matthews is the efficient president.

The *Music Program* of our church includes four choirs under the direction of Miss Mildred Thomas. The ultimate goal of our music department is to reach all ages of the church in an effective program of musical training. The four choirs provide music for all regular services of the church and special occasions. Weekly rehearsals are scheduled as follows: The Junior Choir (boys and girls, 9 - 11) meets on Friday afternoon at 4:00 o'clock; The Intermediate Girls' Choir (ages 12 - 14) meets Wednesday afternoon at 4:00 o'clock; The Young People's Choir (young men and young ladies, 15 - 18) meets Thursday night, 7:30 o'clock; The Adult Choir (young people above high school age and adults) meets Friday night, 7:30 o'clock. The total enrollment of the four choirs is 159. The music library contains approximately 250 anthems and larger choral works which are filed alphabetically on the



1. The Adult Choir.
2. The Beginner Department.
3. The Junior Choir.
4. Music Library.

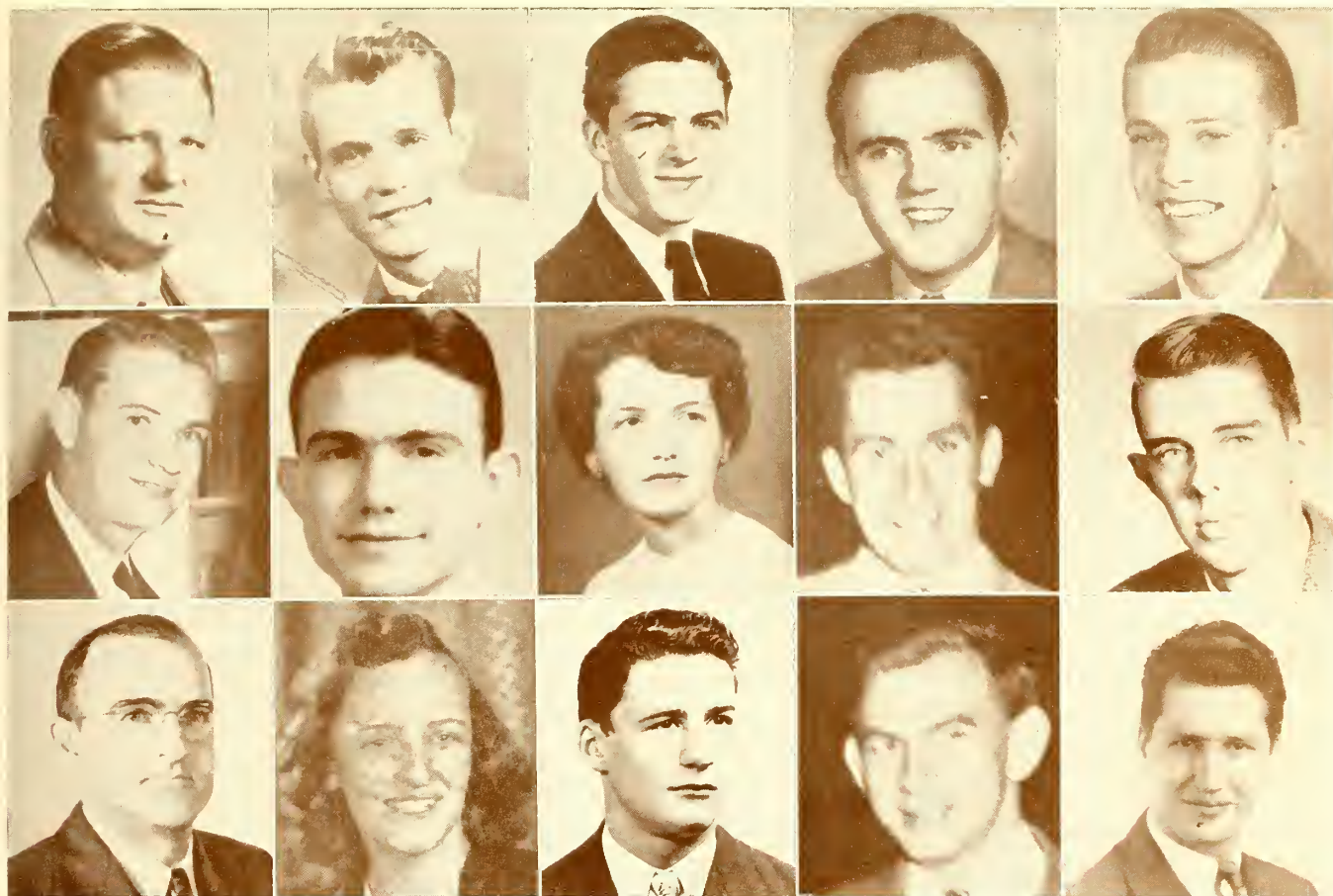
5. Pastor's Study.
6. Church Library.
7. The Young People's Choir.
8. The Intermediate Choir.

shelf in neat file boxes. A three-way card file system makes the music library easily accessible and usable.

In addition to the above organizations, the work of our church is carried on through twenty-four standing *Church Committees*, which make regular written reports of their activities to the church at each quarterly conference. The name of the committee in most cases will indicate the work of the committee. They are: Deacons, Finance Committee, Missions Committee, Fellowship Committee, Visitation Committee, Library Committee, Boy Scouts Committee, Evangelistic Com-

mittee, Youth Service Committee, Social Committee, Funerals Committee, Baptism Committee, Lord's Supper Committee, Building and Grounds Committee, Auditing Committee, Newspaper Publicity Committee, Public Relations Committee, Flower Committee, Ridgecrest Cottage Committee, Offerings and Depository Committee, Ushers and Doormen Committee, Reception Committee (Morning), Reception Committee (Evening) and Pulpit Supply Committee. These committees include 418 people who, in addition to their work in other organizations, constantly carry on the work of our church.





The Church Answering The Great Commission

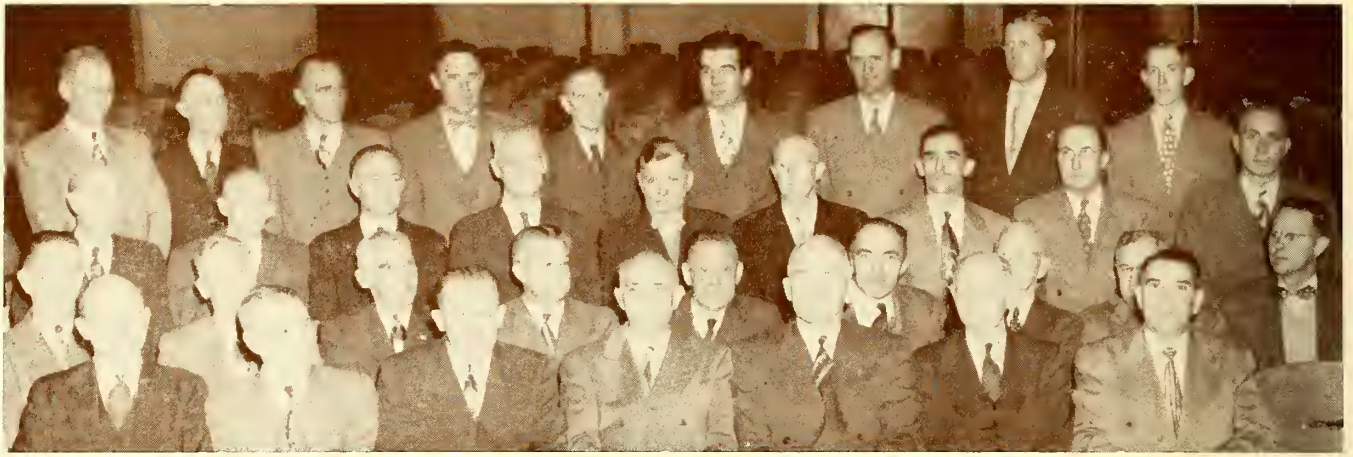
THROUGH the years this church has answered the call of the great commission in the giving of some of her finest young people for full-time Christian service. These serve in many capacities at home and around the world. During the past several years the young people pictured above have entered several phases of Christian service: Ordained ministers are: C. Albert Ambrose, Harold C. Bennett, Henry Crouch, Jack Roe, Ned Wheeler, Jr., Durham Ipock, D. C. Martin, and Ray Roberts; those licensed to preach are: Paul Stewart, Michael McGee, James Y. Greene, Jr., Robert Solomon, and Albert Leath, Jr.; in the field of Religious Education are: Alden Angline and Helen Jones; in Church Secretarial work is: Mrs. Frank Messer.

Prior to these years but not pictured above are these who have also entered the ministry and were ordained by this church: James Butler, Michael Reynolds, Charles McConnell, and Seth Perkinson, Sr. Others who have entered full time

Christian service are: Miss Kathleen Frink, serving as an Associational Missionary; Miss Elma Towe, Miss Freida Culberson, and Mrs. Thomas Smith, engaged in Church Secretarial work. Other young ladies who surrendered for full-time Christian service are now pastors' wives. In a very real sense they are filling a vital place of service.

Missionaries from our church in foreign lands are Dr. and Mrs. J. B. Hipps, China; Miss Lydia Greene, China and Hawaii; Mrs. C. K. Dozier, Japan and Hawaii; Ned Wheeler, Jr., South America; Mr. and Mrs. Ray Braun, Africa; Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Croom, Africa. Miss Naomi Schell served as a missionary to Japan until her health brought her home.

In addition to those already in service, a great host of young people in our church have surrendered their lives to full-time Christian service and are now joined in a volunteer band to be used wherever the Lord may lead, to the end "that the world may know."



DEACONS OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

C. L. Garrett, Chairman; L. M. Becton, C. J. Benfield, Thomas Black, B. V. Chamblee, C. C. Curtiss, Murray Eisenhower, Robert J. Fortune, Jr., A. Jack Garner, Jr., J. Y. Greene, T. M. Gresham, R. E. Myrick, L. A. McGee, George Pennell, Vernon Stroupe, R. M. Van Hoose, W. L. Wagner, J. F. Clarke, M. H. Cox, Jack Garner, III, Dan Glover, Al Henderson, W. F. Hensley, T. F. Johnson, J. Albert Leath, W. B. Nixon, Burgin Pennell, W. E. Reid, George Starnes, J. M. Tatum, C. E. Whitaker, E. M. Wild, L. F. Witt, Reuben Barnitz, Frank Bishop, Chester Brown, C. Y. Carruth, Jr., Paul Crowder, C. D. Edwards, Marvin Gunn, J. Guy Jordan, Elbert J. Lyman, B. K. Miller, Carter Preslar, W. H. Pruett, Lawrence T. Smith, W. L. Swanson, and Sam Wilson. Deacons for life are: E. E. Wheeler, and W. P. Croom.



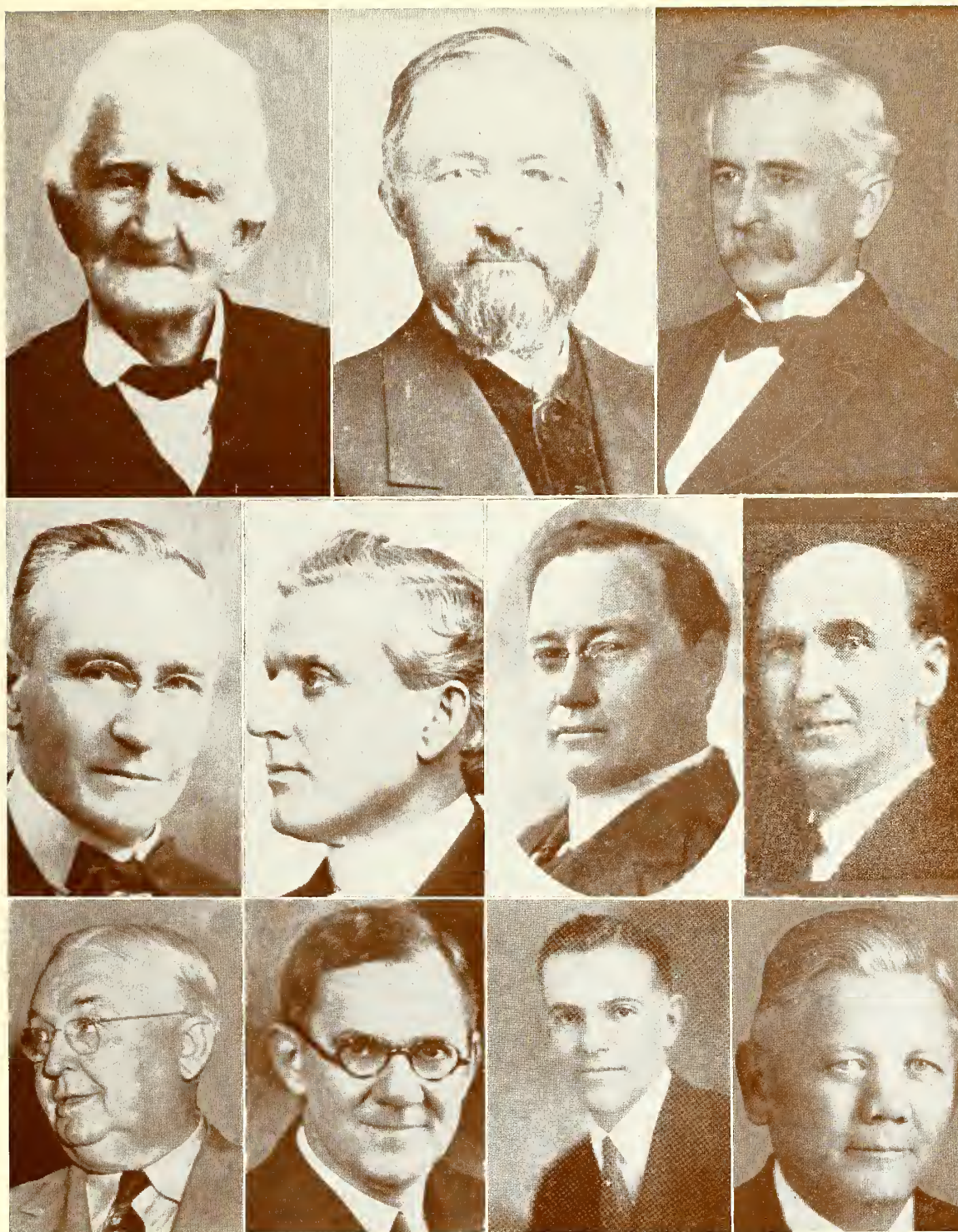
FINANCE COMMITTEE

C. C. Bridgers, Chairman; C. J. Benfield, T. B. Black, P. S. Crowder, R. J. Lewis, W. F. Hensley, E. L. Symms, Chester Brown, W. E. Smathers, C. C. Curtiss, Carter Preslar, Fenton Erwin, Elbert J. Lyman and A. C. Coffey.



HEADS OF CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

Burgin Pennell, S. S. Superintendent; Alden Angline, B. T. U. Director; Mrs. G. Westbrook Murphy, W. M. U. President; James H. Matthews, Men's Service Club President; C. L. Garrett, Chairman of Deacons.



FORMER PASTORS

Reading from left to right: Thomas Stradley, John Mitchell, A. C. Dixon, W. M. Vines, W. M. Lunsford, C. B. Waller, W. F. Powell, R. J. Bateman, W. R. Owen, E. Gibson Davis, John W. Inzer.

Other pastors not pictured above are: J. L. Carroll, W. A. Nelson, J. L. White, and J. S. Felix.



CHURCH BUILDINGS

1. Log Cabin located at end of Patton Avenue, 1829 - 1850.
2. Second building located at the Corner of Spruce and Woodfin Streets, 1871 - 1882.
3. Third building located at the Corner of College and Spruce Streets, 1882 - 1927.
4. Present building located at the Corner of Oak and Woodfin Streets, 1927 - .

Summary Of The History Of The First Baptist Church

BY MISS WALLACE TUCKER



As we stand today with bowed heads and grateful hearts, humbly thanking God "who giveth us the victory," our minds go back through 122 years to other significant days in the history of our church, — to the log meeting-house at the end of Patton Ave.; to the little brick church at the corner of Spruce and Woodfin Streets and to the beautiful old church with its steeple and stained-glass windows which stood for thirty-four years on College and Spruce Streets. Each represents the Vision and Faith, the struggles and sacrifices of a people devoted and dedicated to the cause of Christ.

In 1829 Swan and Frances Burnett, early settlers in Buncombe, lived on the slope of the hill running south on the west bank of the French Broad river above Smith's Ferry, — in the neighborhood of where Mr. Wickes Wamboldt lives today on Beverly Road, West Asheville. On Sunday, February 28, 1829, Thomas Stradley and Elizabeth Gasperson met there and the four of them held a religious service. For three years they met thus on the first Saturday and Sunday of each month and the old record says, "Thomas Stradley led in Divine Worship." Although no church had been organized, Thomas' brother, Peter, and Naomi, his wife, were received by experience and the following month baptized in the French Broad River. By December their number had grown to eleven and with assistance from Isaac Miles of Newfound Baptist Church and Moses Freeman of Bull Creek (there were Baptists in Buncombe prior to 1802) these Baptists who called themselves "Particular Baptists" (the term designating certain doctrinal beliefs) organized into a church which they named Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Swan Burnett and Peter Stradley were chosen, and later ordained, deacons.

In August, 1830, the little church was admitted into the French Broad Association and at this meeting Thomas Stradley was ordained to the Ministry. He was immediately called to be the first pastor of the Baptist Church of Asheville, in which capacity he served through trial and vicissitude for a period of forty-five years. He resigned at the age of seventy-seven. He had emigrated to this country in December, 1828, from England and after living in the little village of Asheville for five years moved up on Beaverdam where he farmed, had his blacksmith shop and raised his thirteen children! Each month he rode in over red-clay roads to preach the Gospel. After

twenty-nine years, in 1858, the old minutes say, "this year the pastor received \$21.00 in gifts."

In 1832 when the church members dedicated their new meeting-house, the log cabin they had built on borrowed land, little did they dream of the difficulties and hardships that lay ahead. Over a period of thirty years they were to gain only eighteen members. The log cabin proved to be too far "out of town" and they often met in the old Court House or by invitation in the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. At one such meeting a collection amounting to \$18.25 was taken for the Baptist Mission. By 1830 the largest amount the church had raised was \$8.00 for Wake Forest Institute. In 1850 the land on which the log house stood changed ownership so they sold their little church for \$20.00. It was ten long years before they built and met for worship in the basement story of the new Baptist Church of Asheville, no longer called Mt. Pleasant! Ten more years were to pass before they moved, in May 1871, into the Auditorium and dedicated their second House of Worship, — the little brick church which still stands on the corner of Spruce and Woodfin Streets.

The new church had been undertaken by these twenty-nine people (only seven males) in complete trust and dependence on God. They had no money so the pastor had given his own property as security for the debt. Threatened with foreclosure, he traveled throughout North and South Carolina soliciting funds and in 1858 appealed to the Baptist State Convention for help. He raised enough money to save his property and the church but a large amount remained due on the building. At one time, because of indebtedness, the doors of the church were nailed up by the contractor. In 1871 Thomas Stradley went as far north as Boston where he preached and was, as he later wrote in the minutes, "eloquent enough to raise money to clear the church debt." This latter had reference to the fact that a few years back some dissatisfaction with the old pastor had arisen in the church, "some wanting a more eloquent preacher"! Mr. N. Bowen served as pastor for a time but because he was unable to raise the \$3,000.00 indebtedness on the church, Thomas Stradley was recalled.

It was a wonderful day when the church moved into the Auditorium. A new spirit was kindled in every heart and the Baptists began moving forward in the work of the Lord. By 1874 we find: preaching three times a month;

pastor's salary \$25.00 a year; membership of 13 males and 24 females; paid for all purposes during the year \$53.20; the Sunday School collection \$22.60. In September, 1875, Dr. T. H. Pritchard, later President of Wake Forest College, organized the first prayer meeting. In this same month "Father Stradley" resigned from the pastorate and Dr. John Mitchell of Murfreesboro, N. C., was called. The church appealed again to the State Mission Board to help pay the pastor. The following year, Rev. F. M. Jordan held a revival in the church and thirty-three converts were baptized in the French Broad River in the presence of two thousand spectators. This was a turning point in the history of the church.

Four years later, in 1880, Dr. A. C. Dixon was called at a salary of \$600.00. In 1881 it was raised to \$1,000.00. Due to the coming of the railroads, this was a boom period in the history of Asheville. In ten years, from 1880 to 1890, the population increased from 2,600 to 10,235. Under Dr. Dixon's evangelistic preaching the church "became the center of live, spiritual activity and the period was marked by an almost constant revival." During his ministry there were several hundred additions to the church. Dr. J. L. Carroll followed Dr. Dixon.

On January 5, 1887, Dr. W. A. Nelson became pastor. The first City Missionary was employed and mission Sunday Schools were started at Biltmore and West End, both of which were later organized into churches. Under Dr. Nelson's consecrated leadership the church outgrew its small building. The membership had increased during these thirteen years from 37 to 500. Committees were appointed to look into the overcrowded conditions and a year later a lot was bought on the corner of Spruce and College Streets. In June, 1882, the beautiful and spacious brick building facing College Street was dedicated by Dr. J. L. White who had become pastor the February before. The building and equipment alone had cost something over \$30,000. So great was the faith of these Baptists that they were willing to undertake great things for God! Soon was that faith put to the test for the financial panic of 1892 swept the country, banks failed and the members of the church were unable to meet their pledges. During the ten years that followed every effort and sacrifice was made to meet the debt. Exactly fifty years ago, in January, 1901, at the Sunday morning service the old First Church raised the last \$15,000 of a \$40,000 debt (including interest). Amid tears of rejoicing they sang praises to God while the last notes of indebtedness were burned in the presence of the congregation. This was in the third year of Dr. Vines'

pastorate (1898-1904).

Debt free the church was now ready to undertake greater things and the period that followed was marked by continuous growth and enlargement. It was a time of great evangelistic effort when ten and fifteen-day revivals were held and the church would be filled to capacity at both services, the unsaved attending in great numbers. There was a moral wave of opposition to the open saloons and our church took the lead in the vigorous campaign which resulted in prohibition. It was the time of "Special-Days" in the church, missionary rallies where the representatives from our home and foreign mission boards stirred the congregation to its depths with their missionary appeals. The church grew in benevolent contributions; missionary collections increased from \$103.31 in 1899 to \$2,750 in 1910, the last year of Dr. Vines' second pastorate. In 1900 mission Sunday Schools were established in North Asheville, South Asheville and Chunn's Cove. Seven missionaries went to foreign fields, and many of our young men were ordained to the ministry. During these years the membership increased from 500 to 2,000. Able Assistant Pastors or Educational Directors were employed. The Workers' Council, the Men's Service Club and the Citizens Bible Class were organized. The Sunday School grew to an enrollment of 1,000, the B.T.U. increased to ten groups and the Woman's Missionary Society was divided into thirteen circles.

Thirty-four years were spent in the location at College Street with the following serving as pastors: Drs. J. L. White, J. S. Felix, W. M. Vines, Wm. Lunsford, W. M. Vines a second pastorate, Calvin Waller, W. F. Powell and Robert Bateman who came to the church in 1921.

Under Dr. Bateman's leadership every branch of the church work was accelerated and the congregations overflowed the auditorium at both morning and evening services. The Sunday School building was condemned as unsafe, so once again the Baptists were faced with the necessity of enlargement or building. The latter was considered the wiser solution and our present church on the corner of Oak and Woodfin Streets was constructed at a cost of approximately \$700,000. In the exaggerated values of the boom years following World War I the undertaking did not seem so tremendous for a prosperous membership of 2,000. Ground for the new church was broken November 16, 1925. On March 6, 1927, our modern and splendidly equipped buildings were dedicated. Dr. E. Y. Mullins, President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky, preached the dedicatory sermon to an overflow congregation of 2,000.

Two years later the devastating depression of 1929 came and with it financial collapse. The events of 1892 had repeated themselves! The church was left reeling under an overwhelming debt. Dr. Bateman resigned in 1930 after nine years of fruitful ministry. He was succeeded by the following pastors: Drs. Wm. Russell Owen, E. Gibson Davis and John W. Inzer. In the face of a difficult depression these men led the church on to higher spiritual plains. They kept the faith of the people strong and the work of the church continued in a healthy manner. During these years under Mrs. John Inzer's artistic direction, the dining rooms were beautified and the adult assembly hall was transformed into a lovely chapel. In 1937 the church debt was refinanced without compromising any part of the principal of the indebtedness. During the next several years the interest was paid with some reduction in principal. The debt, however, amounting to \$258,000 in 1943 was still a heavy burden.

Dr. W. Perry Crouch, our present pastor, came to our church in January, 1944, from the First Baptist Church of Fayetteville, N. C., where he had served during the first part of the war. Prior to that time he had served as Secretary of the Department of Christian Education of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina for five years, and held pastorates in Morganton, N. C., and Hollis, Okla. He holds an A. B. degree from Lenoir-Rhyne College and a Master of Theology from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Some years ago his Alma Mater, Lenoir-Rhyne College, conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

The family of Dr. Crouch has been a constant inspiration to our church. Mrs. Crouch has served in a splendid way in all of the organizations. The oldest son, Henry, is now a second year student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky. The second son, Robert, is a first year student at Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest College. The youngest son, Dan, is a freshman at Mars Hill College. The foster daughter, Ruby, is now Mrs. Allen Patterson of Asheville, and superintendent of Adult A department in our Sunday school.

Dr. Crouch is a young man of high intellectual ability and fine personality. He has not only done an excellent work as our pastor, but has been a leader in our community and denomination as well. He is at present chairman of the Executive Committee of the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and a retiring member of the Executive Committee of the South-

ern Baptist Convention. He is also a Trustee of Wake Forest College and the new Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Several years ago, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention he had an important part in the proceedings that led to the establishment of the new Seminary at Wake Forest.

During these years our pastor has shown a keen understanding of the problems of our young people, and is in constant demand as a counselor on youth problems, especially in preparation for marriage. He has led many groups in church and state assemblies in discussions of marriage and family problems, and is a past president of the Family Life Education Council of our city. He has also been active in the work of the Community Chest, Good Samaritan Mission and other community groups.

During his pastorate the young people have shown increased interest in the work of the church. One young man has gone to the mission field and two others are now in the seminary in preparation for mission work. Twelve young men have answered the call to the ministry during the past seven years. Seven of them have been ordained to the full work of the ministry, and five others are ministerial students in college. Twenty-five others make up a volunteer band and are ready to go wherever the Lord would have them go. Since 1944, four hundred and sixty-six people have been baptized into the fellowship of our church, and 1099 have been received by letter and statement. The church rolls have been carefully corrected and more than six hundred names removed because of a long period of absence and inactivity. The present membership is 2502.

Shortly after the beginning of his work Dr. Crouch led the church in adopting the unified budget plan, and within four years the receipts had more than tripled. He has ever kept before us the necessity of clearing the burdensome debt that we might, under God's leadership turn to the greater fields of opportunity and need that lie beyond our doors. With great vision and faith, uniting the church in purpose and effort and devotedness to the cause of Christ, he has led the way through all odds and difficulties to the victory we celebrate today!

From log-cabin days the church has risen to a place of leadership throughout our entire Southland. Through one-hundred twenty-two years God has led and blessed the First Baptist Church of Asheville. May we step into the future that awaits us with renewed hope and trust in Him, with a spirit of rededication and loyalty, walking ever onward into the plans and purposes of God.

PROGRAM PERSONALITIES

- Thomas B. Black, Deacon, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Dr. Walter E. Clark, Deacon, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
*Dr. E. Gibson Davis, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Kingsport, Tenn.
Dr. C. Grier Davis, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church Asheville, N. C.
Mrs. J. M. Dawson, Washington, D. C.
Horace Eason, Wake Forest Enlargement Director, Shelby, N. C.
Mrs. Murray Eisenhower, Superintendent of Young People's Department, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Dr. W. H. Fitzgerald, Teacher, Senior Bible Class, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
C. L. Garrett, Chairman of Deacons, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Dr. M. A. Huggins, General Secretary of Baptist State Convention, Raleigh, N. C.
*Dr. John W. Inzer, Sylacauga, Alabama.
The Hon. Clarence E. Morgan, Mayor of the City of Asheville, N. C.
Burgin Mullinax, Soloist, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Mrs. G. Westbrook Murphy, W. M. U. President, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Mrs. H. L. McDaris, Soloist, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Dr. Duke K. McCall, Executive Secretary of Executive Committee S. B. C., Nashville, Tenn.
Dr. J. R. Owen, Retired, Asheville, N. C.
Nell Parsons, Soloist, Asheville, N. C.
Burgin Pennell, Atty., General Superintendent of Sunday School, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
George Pennell, Atty., Teacher of Citizens Bible Class, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
*Dr. W. F. Powell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.
Carter M. Preslar, Teacher, Harding Bible Class, First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Rev. Nane Starnes, Moderator, Buncombe Baptist Association, Asheville, N. C.
Dr. Harold W. Tribble, President, Wake Forest College, Wake Forest, N. C.
*Dr. W. M. Vines, Birmingham, Alabama.
Clarence N. Walker, Berry Schools, Mount Berry, Ga.
Dr. C. C. Warren, President, General Board of Baptist State Convention, Charlotte, N. C.
Adult Choir of the First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.
Men's Quartet of the First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C.: Messers Burgin Mullinax, Emmett J. Davis, Ray F. Ingle, and J. B. McIntosh.

*Former Pastor

NOTES

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